

CLAIMS

✓ (1) A data output control apparatus which is communicatively connected via a network to a portable terminal which is a portable communications device, carried by a user, for issuing a data print request, and to a plurality of output terminals, disposed at various locations, for printing data, and which outputs, in response to the data print request from said portable terminal, data associated with the data print request to said output terminals,

said apparatus comprising selecting means for selecting one of said plurality of output terminals; output means for outputting said data associated with the data print request to the output terminal selected by said selecting means; and billing means for executing billing in accordance with the result of use by said portable terminal of a print service provided by said apparatus;

characterized in that said billing means calculates a service charge in accordance with the result of use by said portable terminal according to a charge calculation definition table which defines the service charge as the price of the print service with regard to the result of use by the portable terminal, and adds the calculated service charge to the communications charge of said portable terminal.

(2) A data output control apparatus according to Claim 1, comprising storage means which stores, for each user of said portable terminal, authentication data for determining whether or not the user is a legitimate user of said print service; and comparison means for comparing authentication data received from said portable terminal and the authentication data in said storage means;

characterized in that said comparison means compares the authentication data received from said portable terminal and the authentication data in said storage means, and if they satisfy a predetermined relationship, permits an output by said output means and execution of billing by said billing means.

Sub A1 (3) A data output control apparatus according to one of Claims 1 and 2, characterized in that said output means outputs billing data, indicating the result of billing by said billing means, to said portable terminal.

(4) A data output control apparatus according to one of Claims 1 to 3, wherein said communications charge is calculated as a fixed charge until the communications time of said portable terminal exceeds a predetermined time,

characterized in that until the sum of a communications time in accordance with said service charge and the actual communications time of said portable terminal

exceeds said predetermined time, said billing means does not add said service charge to said communications charge while adding the communications time in accordance with said service charge to said actual communications time.

5 ✓(5) A data output control apparatus which is communicatively connected via a network to a portable terminal which is a portable communications device, carried by a user, for issuing a data output request, and to a plurality of output terminals, disposed at various locations, for outputting data, and which outputs, in response to the data output request from said portable terminal, data associated with the data output request to said output terminals,

10 said apparatus comprising selecting means for selecting one of said plurality of output terminals; output means for outputting said data associated with the data output request to the output terminal selected by said selecting means; and billing means for executing billing in accordance with the result of use by said portable terminal of an output service provided by said apparatus;

15 characterized in that said billing means calculates a service charge in accordance with the result of use by said portable terminal according to a charge calculation definition table which defines the service charge as the price of the output service with regard to the result of use by the portable terminal, and adds the calculated service charge to the communications charge of said portable terminal.

20 (6) A data output control apparatus according to Claim 5, comprising storage means which stores, for each user of said the portable terminal, authentication data for determining whether or not the user is a legitimate user of said output service; and comparison means for comparing authentication data received from said portable terminal and the authentication data in said storage means;

25 characterized in that said comparison means compares the authentication data received from said portable terminal and the authentication data in said storage means, and if they satisfy a predetermined relationship, permits an output by said output means and execution of billing by said billing means.

30 (7) A data output control apparatus according to one of Claims 5 and 6, characterized in that said output means outputs billing data, indicating the result of billing by said billing means, to said portable terminal.

(8) A data output control apparatus according to one of Claims 5 to 7, wherein said communications charge is calculated as a fixed charge until the communications time of said portable terminal exceeds a predetermined time,

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